

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LONDON

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 177039

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MILI, OCLR, UK, SF

SUBJECT: PROPOSED SAFAIR USE OF U.S. LANDING FACILITIES

SUMMARY: SAG HAS FORMALLY REQUESTED USG PERMISSION TO USE
USG FACILITIES ON ASCENSION ISLAND FOR THREE FLIGHTS BY
SAFAIR, A SOUTH AFRICAN COMMERCIAL FREIGHT AIRLINE, UNDER
CHARTER TO SOUTH AFRICAN AIR FORCE. UK HAS GRANTED LANDING
PERMISSION FOR THESE FLIGHTS. SINCE WE STRONGLY SUSPEC?
PLANES ARE TRANSPORTING PARTIALLY ASSEMBLED MIRAGE JET
FIGHTERS, DEPT. AND DOD PLAN TO REFUSE USG PERMISSION FOR
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SAFAIR FLIGHTS TO UEE ASCENSION. WE WOULD BASE OUR REFUSAL

ON ART. 11, PARA. 3 OF 1956 U.S.-U.K. AGREEMENT ON USE OF ASCENSION WHICH PROHIBITS COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT FROM UTILIZING ASCENSION EXCEPT BY U.S.-U.K. AGREEMENT AND ON ARTICLE 15 OF THE 1944 CHICAGO CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION. FINAL USG DECISION HAS BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL END OF JULY AT REQUEST OF SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY WHICH DESIRES TO SUPPLY FURTHER INFORMATION. DEPARTMENT WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY LONDON RAISING WITH FRO DESIRABILITY OF CONSULTING WITH US PRIOR TO GRANTING FUTURE CLEARANCES FOR THIRD COUNTRY USE OF ASCENSION. END SUMMARY.

(1) SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY FORMALLY REQUESTED USG PERMISSION ON JUNE 24 TO USE USG LANDING FACILITIES AT ASCENSION ISLAND FOR THREE FLIGHTS BY SAFAIR, A SOUTH AFRICAN COMMERCIAL FREIGHT AIRLINE, UNDER A SOUTH AFRICAN AIR FORCE CONTRACT. SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED WERE FUEL AND BILLETING FACILITIES FOR THE CREWS. SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY NOTE STATED THAT U.K. CLEARANCE FOR PERIOD JANUARY-JULY 1975 FOR THESE FLIGHTS WAS GRANTED BY FCO (NOTE VERBALE DPT 7/494/1 OF JAN 24, 1975).

(2) SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY HAS INFORMED DEPARTMENT VERBALLY THAT THESE SAFAIR FLIGHTS WILL ORIGINATE IN JOHANNESBURG, FLY TO BORDEAUX AND RETURN TO JOHANNESBURG BY WAY OF ASCENSION. THE SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY CLAIMS THAT IT HAS NOT BEEN INFORMED AS TO THE SPECIFIC CONTENTS OF THE CARGO BUT ASSUMES CARGO CONSISTS OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT SINCE THE FLIGHTS ARE UNDER SOUTH AFRICAN AIR FORCE CHARTER. DEPARTMENT BELIEVES FLIGHTS MAY BE CARRYING PARTIALLY ASSEMBLED MIRAGE JET FIGHTERS. SAFAIR TOLD EMBASSY PRETORIA SEVERAL MONTHS AGO THAT IT HAD CONTRACT TO TRANSPORT PARTIALLY ASSEMBLED MIRAGES TO SOUTH AFRICA. THE PLANT WHERE MIRAGE PLANES ARE BUILT IS LOCATED IN BORDEAUX.

(3) U.K. FCO HAS INFORMED EMBASSY LONDON THAT THESE THREE SAFAIR FLIGHTS ARE THE REMAINDER OF 16 FLIGHTS CLEARED BY U.K. IN JANUARY 1975 TO LAND AT ASCENSION. SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY HAS TOLD US THAT IN SPRING OF 1975 IT MADE INFORMAL INQUIRIES IN DOD ON USE OF ASCENSION
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BY SAFAIR FLIGHTS, BUT DID NOT REQUEST FORMAL US PERMISSION TO USE USG FACILITIES AND CONSEQUENTLY SAFAIR FLIGHTS USED ANOTHER ROUTE. ACCORDING TO SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY SAG WAS NOT HAPPY WITH THIS ROUTE AND REQUESTED EMBASSY IN JUNE TO SEEK FORMAL USG PERMISSION TO USE ASCENSION.

(4) DEPARTMENT AND DOD PLAN TO REFUSE

USG PERMISSION FOR SAFAIR COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS TO USE ASCENSION. REASONS ARE THREE FOLD: (A) THE 1956 U.S.-U.K. AGREEMENT ON THE USE OF ASCENSION (TIAS 3603) STATES THAT COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT SHALL NOT BE AUTHORIZED TO OPERATE FROM ASCENSION EXCEPT BY U.S.-U.K. AGREEMENT; (B) WERE WE TO OPEN ASCENSION TO SELECTIVE USE BY COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT WE COULD BE REQUIRED TO MAKE IT AVAILABLE TO COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT OF ALL COUNTRIES WHO ARE PARTIES TO 1944 CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION (CHICAGO CONVENTION); AND (C) WE ARE CONCERNED THAT USG APPROVAL OF AIRCRAFT TRANSPORTING MILITARY EQUIPMENT WOULD APPEAR TO CONSTITUTE USG SUPPORT FOR SOUTH AFRICAN EFFORTS TO CIRCUMVENT UN ARMS EMBARGO, WHICH WOULD BE CONTRARY TO OUR POLICY SUPPORT THE 1963 UN ARMS EMBARGO RESOLUTIONS. SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY REQUESTED ON JULY 17 THAT DEPARTMENT HOLD OFF ITS DECISION FOR TWO WEEKS IN ORDER TO PERMIT EMBASSY TO SUPPLY FURTHER UNSPECIFIED INFORMATION. DEPARTMENT IS COMPLYING WITH THIS REQUEST.

(5) ACTION REQUESTED: WE WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY LONDON RAISING WITH FCO DESIRABILITY OF CONSULTING WITH US BEFORE GRANTING CLEARANCE OR INDICATING NO OBJECTION TO THIRD COUNTRY USE OF ASCENSION FACILITY, PARTICULARLY SOUTH AFRICA, TO AVOID IF POSSIBLE LEAVING ONUS OF DISAPPROVAL ON USG. INGERSOLL

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